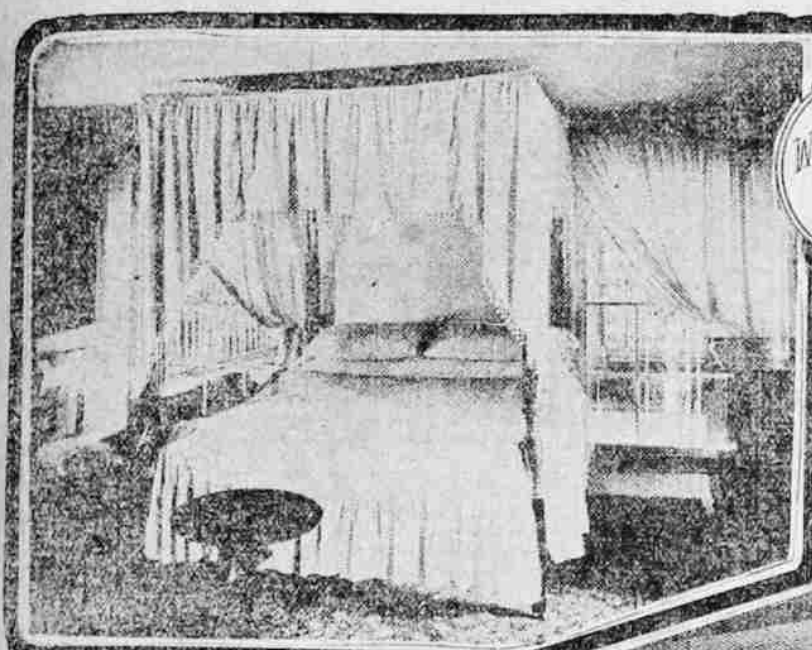


TO BUY MOUNT VERNON

GOVERNMENT TO ACQUIRE
HOME OF WASHINGTON.

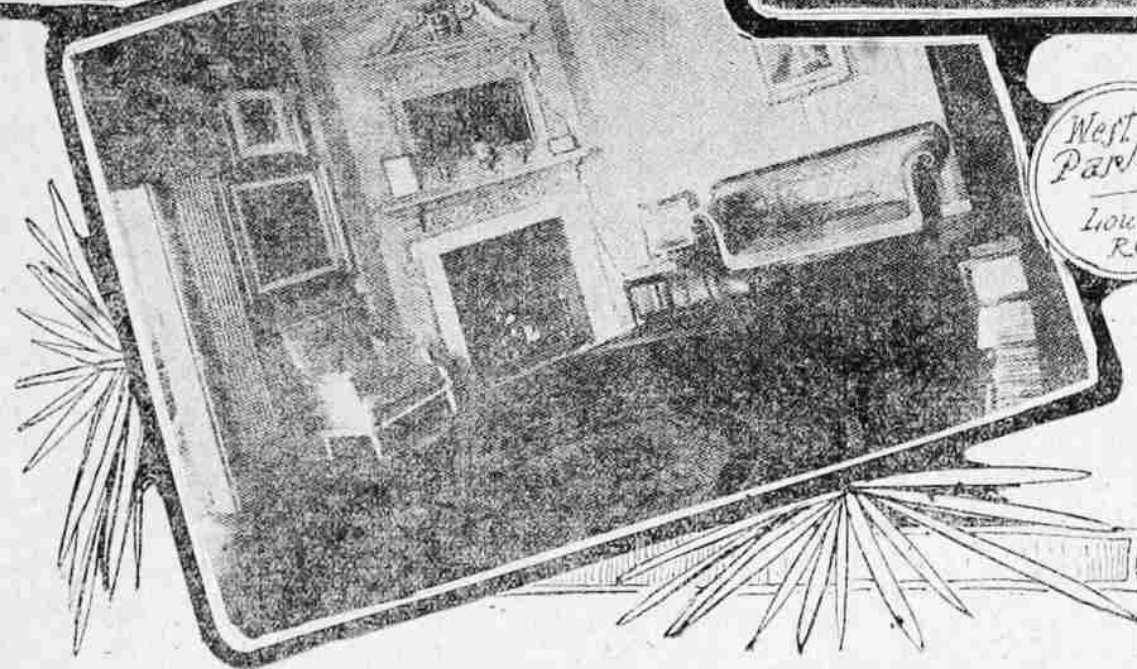
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Washington's
Death Bed



Mt
VERNON



West
Parlor
Louis XVI
Rug

A proposition to sell Mount Vernon to the Federal Government is to be laid before the Virginia Legislature by Governor Slaughter of that State, and a bill to the same end is to be introduced in Congress. This project, started by the United States War Veterans, is receiving the endorsement of Governors, Representatives, Senators and other public men, who agree in the view that the home and burial place of George Washington—the most sacred spot in all America—should be constituted a public reservation which all citizens, rich or poor, may visit without being assessed a fee of admission.

Just sixty years ago the Nation was offered Mount Vernon for \$100,000 by Mrs. Jane C. Washington, then the proprietor of the estate. Leading citizens memorialized Congress to appropriate this sum in order that "the slanderous charge accusing Republicans of being in variously ungrateful will be refuted," and that the American people might "enjoy the right and privilege of visiting, unrestrictedly, the venerated grounds, mansion and sepulcher of Washington." Vice-President Dallas, David H. Atchison, President and temporary of the Senate, Speaker Davis, leading members of the Senate, the cabinet and the House were leaders in the movement. Mrs. Jane C. Washington offered to sell the property on condition that neither the remains of George Washington nor those of any other member of his family should ever be removed from the grounds; that every living member of Washington's family might be buried there; that the Government should never dispose of the property, and that in the event of the dissolution of the existing Federal Government, the estate should revert to the heirs of John Augustine Washington, 3d, Mrs. Jane Washington's eldest son.

Too Poor to Keep Up Repairs.

This son inherited the estate before Congress saw fit to appropriate the \$100,000, and being too poor to keep the large property in repair, he made an ineffectual attempt to sell it to the State of Virginia. In 1858, however, he sold it for \$200,000 to the present owners, the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the United States. This society had been organized in 1856 by Miss Ann Pamela Cunningham of South Carolina. Patriotic women in every State solicited money for the purchase and Edward Everett added to the fund nearly \$70,000, earned in lecturing on behalf of the project.

The original Mount Vernon tract, belonging to George Washington's half brother, Lawrence, had comprised 2500 acres. Lawrence named the estate after Admiral Vernon, a British officer whom he had served. George Washington, after inheriting it in 1752, enlarged its boundaries until they included nearly 8000 acres. But by the time the estate had descended to John Augustine

Washington, 3d, it had dwindled in size. That great-grandnephew of the first President had, for the \$100,000 asked of Congress, offered 150 acres with the mansion, tomb and outbuildings. At double this price the association obtained 200 acres and by subsequent additions they at present control 237 acres of the original estate. This act of the Virginia Legislature incorporating the association in 1856, provides that the association "shall not have power to alien the said land or any part thereof; or to create a charge thereon; or to lease the same without the consent of the General Assembly of Virginia first had and obtained." Therefore the consent of the Virginia Legislature must be had before the property can be purchased by even the Federal Government.

Rooms Empty; Furniture Scattered.

The rooms of the mansion were empty when the association purchased the property. The furniture of George and Martha Washington had long before disappeared. By the latter's will most of their household effects were divided among her grandchildren by her former marriage. In this way the original furniture was widely scattered among persons of no blood relationship to the first President. The real property, however, descended to Washington's own blood through his favorite nephew, Bushrod Washington, through the latter's nephew, John Augustine Washington, 2d, and then to John Augustine Washington, 3d. These owners furnished the house as they saw fit.

How Mount Vernon has been restored is worth telling. The architecture has never been changed since, in 1786,

George Washington, in increasing its length and height; enlarged the central portion built by his half brother, Lawrence, in 1743. With the exception of material added by way of repair, the house still retains the original brick and stone foundation, the same oak framework and the same roof of express shingles that were added by its immortal owner; also the original sheathing of North Carolina pine, painted and sanded to resemble stone. Nearly everything was in bad repair, however, when the association acquired the property.

Bringing Back the Furniture.

Each feature to be restored was assigned to one of the vice regents of the association, there being one such officer for each State of the Union. Some were given rooms, others outbuildings, others structural details. Gradually, in this way, much of the original furniture and personal effects of the Washingtons have been reassembled in the stately house. This work is still in progress, interesting relics of the family having been returned to the house in the past year. Some of these precious relics have been given, some purchased and others loaned. In the central hallway downstairs these patient women have restored the original colors and paneling of the walls to the condition in which Washington left them after improving this hall in 1775. From old fragments recently discovered they have reproduced the original wall paper along the front stairway, and for these same walls they have even obtained replicas of some of the engravings which Washington owned. In the lower hall they have hung the

key to the French Bastille, presented to Washington by Lafayette after its fall; also three of Washington's swords.

Louis XVI's Rug.

The rug which Louis XVI. ordered woven especially for Washington, and which contains the coat of arms of the United States, was obtained and placed in the west parlor, as was an old painting of Admiral Lawrence Washington, as an acknowledgment of the naming of the estate "Mount Vernon." Original chairs, curtains, cornices and other furnishings have been obtained for this room, and a piano of Washington's time has been placed where the original instrument probably stood. The original Hopewellshire shagreen and cutlery cases, the china set given to Martha Washington by the French fleet, and some original glassware belonging to the Washingtons have been put back in their original places in the family dining room, as have their card table, mirror, candelabra, pictures, a chair presented by Lafayette, and other articles in Mrs. Washington's sitting room.

For the library, efforts have been made to obtain the original Washington books, but most of them have been traced to the Boston Athenaeum, which does not care to part with them. A large collection of Washingtonian has been placed on the old shelves instead, but the general's original desk, desk chair, mahogany bookcase, globe, surveyor's tripod, gun and pictures have been obtained for this room.

The large silver platter imported by Washington for his banquet table has been restored to the big banquet hall, as have his clock, candlesticks, silver

bracket lamps, mirror, rosewood vases, stands, and various other articles. Here has also been placed the model of the Bastille which Lafayette sent to Washington in 1783.

Deathbed Returned.

The bedstead upon which Washington died has been returned to its place in his bed chamber, as have his red-covered armchair, military trunk, secretary and shaving stand. But for the little attic room where Mrs. Washington secluded herself in her last days, that she might view the general's tomb from its solitary window, and where she died in 1802, only the original washstand has been restored.

The mansion's other rooms have been furnished in the correct style for the colonial period, and contain many valuable relics of Washington's contemporaries. The kitchen and spinning room have been consistently refurnished, and the servants' quarters, summer house, flower garden, barn and coach house have been repaired and restored. The separate servants' quarters, although found in ruins, have been exactly reproduced, so far as their exteriors are concerned, while in the flower garden trees and shrubs planted by Lafayette, Jefferson and other notables, also roses named by Washington, are still kept alive. Washington's deer paddock, in the wooded slope along the river and below the front lawn, has been restocked with Virginia deer, and the original Washington coach—a vehicle of colonial elegance—has been returned to the old carriage house. The old tomb, whence, for fear of landslides, all of the remains of the Washington family were removed to the new vault in 1831, has been extensively repaired. These indefatigable women have also built a picturesque wharf on the site where Washington shipped his farm produce to market, and they have recently bored, into the adjacent hills, long tunnels, which will drain the water-bearing sands and will prevent a repetition of the landslides formerly caused by such quicksands. The maintenance of the grand old estate thus restored by these patriotic women of America, depends upon the entrance fee of 25 cents charged at the gates and from the sale of photographs, souvenirs, plants and flowers. Their great task of restoring the estate to its original colonial grandeur has demanded not money alone, but executive ability and artistic taste. Colonial decoration alone is an art demanding years of study, and it is generally conceded that Mount Vernon, inside and out, is the best type of colonial mansion to be found today in all of the Americas.

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New Boulevard From Washington.

A new boulevard running from Mount Vernon through Alexandria, Va., is another project now gaining headway. The present roadway is one relic of Washington's day whose modernization the most patriotic citizen will not brand as a vandalism. The home of Washington may be reached safely and comfortably by electric car and by boat, but carriages and automobiles attempting the trip experience too perilous a touch of the realism of colonial days. The Circuit courts of the counties through which the highway runs have been asked to appoint commissioners to ascertain what properties must be condemned for the new boulevard. A bill introduced in this session of Congress authorizes the Secretary of War to spend \$50,000 in converting into a boulevard forty feet wide that part of the road between Washington and Mount Vernon which runs through the government's Arlington reservation. Both of these highway projects having materialized, there will be a modern boulevard fourteen miles long connecting Washington, Arlington, Alexandria and Mount Vernon. Twenty years ago there was a movement on foot to connect Washington and Mount Vernon with a "memorial highway" 200 feet wide. The Virginia Legislature incorporated a body of men to carry out the project, and authorized them to obtain funds for the work by collecting from Congress \$120,000, which Virginia in 1790 granted for public buildings in Washington. But Congress did not disburse.

The government can greatly further the restoration of Mount Vernon if it purchases the property. The large Washington collection in the National Museum would probably be installed in the mansion, as would the Washington relics in the Department of State.

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